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PEOPLES OF
MANY LANDS

# THE PEOPLE OF HOLLAND

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# THE PEOPLE OF HOLLAND

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GORDON HOME

22665

LONDON

ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

1910

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# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS IN COLOUR


An Interior, Volendam
A Marken Interior
Baby in Chair
A Little Maiden
A Boy of Veere astride a Rocking-Horse
A Girl with a Rabbit
A Boy Smoking, Volendam
A Girl with a Doll
A Peasant Boy of Veere on Skates
A Girl of Marken
A Boy Cleaning a Kettle
The Dove
A Fisher-Boy
An Amsterdam Street-Boy with Clappers
A Peasant Girl of Goes
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The Sale of a Cow
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Woman of Hulst
Mother and Baby
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Old Woman of Drenthe
A Race on Skates
An Old Fisherman
An Old Man of Axel
Tired Out
An Old Fisherman of Scheveningen
A Man's Head, Volendam


*Also* 32 *smaller Illustrations in Black and White printed on the interleaves*


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LANGUAGE
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# THE PEOPLE OF HOLLAND

22665

A LADY of my acquaintance who has lately spent some time in Holland with a Dutch family of considerable wealth tells me that she gained no small distinction for sleeping with the window of her bedroom open and for indulging in a daily bath. Every visitor to the house was informed at the earliest opportunity of these two strange practices on the part of the English girl. We know that in the little Duchy of Hanover a bath was seldom taken, even by the greatest in the land, as recently as the days of George I., and that Sophia Dorothea of Celle, the unfortunate wife of that silent monarch, was given a bath as a distraction to help to amuse her and take her thoughts from Philip of Königsmarck, for whom she had conceived a violent attachment. Old customs do not change quickly on the Continent, and the health-giving bath of civilization appears to make slow advances in Holland. But cleanliness in other directions, for which the Dutch housewife has long been renowned, still takes the form of the most thorough washing of the exterior of the dwelling. The windows are closed—they are not often otherwise—and water

is played on the walls, windows and doors with a hose or squirt, as a stableman cleans a carriage. The turning-out of sitting-rooms goes on at all hours of the day, and internal commotions of furniture, and the scrubbing and polishing generally finished in the early part of the day in an English household, will be commenced late and carried on to an hour when the ordinary mind regards cleaning as an abomination. Nevertheless, the Dutchman allows his canals to be so polluted that the atmosphere is tainted by them, and even the best classes regard matutinal ablutions as outside everyday needs.

The difficulties in the way of purifying the canals are immense, for the Dutchman has no natural river drainage from high ground to the sea; a large section of his little country—it is about the size of Yorkshire—being actually below sea-level, the canals are obliged to be a trifle lower and to reach the ocean the water must be pumped uphill over the dykes.

Speaking in broad terms of the people of Holland, the characteristic most prominent from the present occupant of the throne downwards is simplicity. Their customs may often be as formal as their methods of gardening, but the keynote of their lives is simple homeliness—a word which includes, it is true, a measure of uncouthness. In the wealthier families, for

instance, one finds no great enthusiasm for the army, and a father will be keener to put his sons into solid commercial positions than to adopt for them a more showy profession.

The better-class Dutchman keeps a good table, but although his appetite is inclined to be hearty he is not a gourmand. A dinner-party will be well arranged, with beautiful old silver on the table, good wine, admirable cooking, and dignified, white-gloved waiters, yet those who partake do not wear evening dress, and the guests are expected to carry away, if they care to, sweets from the table for their small folk at home. The upper classes being free from any desire to assume patrician flamboyance or unreality, it follows that the whole population is composed of grades of peasants and burghers whose lives are closely in touch with the actual elements of existence to a far greater extent than is found in the Anglo-Saxon countries.

Although a slow and conservative people, there are changes working in the country which have already resulted in a loss of picturesqueness in costume, so much so that the ill-informed are only too ready to state that the baggy trousers of the men and the strange head-dresses of the women are to be seen nowhere but in pictures to-day. This is fortunately untrue.

The decaying fisheries of the Zuider Zee and of the islands of Zeeland still support a population whose curious and unwieldy-looking dress is an attraction to the tourist and the artist. Mr. Jungman's paintings reveal what charm and quaintness still linger among the fisherfolk and peasants of Zeeland, of Gelderland, of Darenthe, of Overysel, of Groningen, and of North and South Brabant. The older types of the North Holland boer are steadily disappearing, but a visit to a busy cheesemarket will still bring one in touch with some delightful examples of the old-fashioned farmer of the polders. He lives a regular and monotonous life, broken by market-days and the annual kermis or fair, and having few, if any, distractions from his work, the boer is generally a skilful salesman and runs his farm with tolerable success. He glories in the sleek condition of his black and white cows and in his smartly-painted light cart, in which he drives to market with his good wife seated at his side.

The kermis is the annual event towards which the younger members of peasant and burgher classes look forward from year to year. For its pleasures they put by their odd savings throughout the preceding months, and when the fair day at last dawns sobriety is flung to the winds. The older folks in Zeeland, beyond taking a few extra glasses of schiedam, do not take part in

the festivities of the younger folk. In the early morning the youths and girls, wearing their best clothes, pack themselves into the capacious, old-fashioned carts which the farmers of the district generally keep, and, drawn by great Flemish horses, with flowing manes and tails, they start off with much jollity and laughter for the neighbouring town. At the wayside inns all the carts, which eventually make a considerable procession, are brought to a halt while the noisy peasants get down for more drinks, so that before long the sweethearts who were at first bashful and inclined to giggle become excited and noisy with alcohol.

When the scene of the fair is reached, stables are found for the horses, and the carts are drawn up in long lines in the narrow streets outside various inns. Many of the peasants are already in the good-natured, happy-go-lucky state of partial intoxication, and nearly all are excited and ready for any form of sky-larking. The young men and maidens soon lighten their pockets of great numbers of guldens at the stalls where fairings are sold or at the booths where hot buttered cakes called *poffertjes* are baked to order. A woman with a deft assistant stands on a raised platform in front of three large and imposing tubs of well-polished brass. A peasant boy and his sweetheart want some

of her cakes, and instantly the batter and other ingredients are ladled from the tubs into moulds in a girdle, which the assistant has already buttered. A fierce wood fire burns underneath, and in a few minutes, while the assistant keeps turning the cakes with his fork, there are a dozen or two of these appetizing, although indigestible, delicacies ready for consumption. Vast quantities of these *poffertjes* are baked and eaten, and much drinking goes on, so that in time what has been termed the brutish element of the Dutch peasant begins to be very apparent. There are merry-go-rounds and such amusements of the usual type, but these are chiefly patronized by the burgher class, the peasants preferring to pass their time, when their pockets are empty, in hours of senseless jigs generally regarded as dancing. They join hands in a row of seven or eight, and, singing a monotonous tune endlessly reiterated, they jump and dance together through the streets, where there is all too little room for such performances ; and finally, after last drinks, they reach their horses and carts. With the help of ostlers, who have also passed a convivial day, the beasts are harnessed, and the homeward journey is begun in comparative silence, for weariness and drunken slumber settle down on the laden carts. The horses, having taken no part in the festivities, require little driving or

guidance along the straight level roads, otherwise the proximity of canals on either hand might mean disaster.

Efforts are being made to refine and improve the kermis, but it is slow work, for the peasants, though naturally abstemious, have no sense of wrong-doing when they plunge headlong into excess on the one great annual day of riot. The result of the intercourse of kermis days generally takes a permanent form in weddings directly attributable to the holiday. In Zeeland, where the farmers are, as a rule, tolerably well off, a wedding is conducted with much ceremonial and expense. The wedding guests arrive early in the morning at the farm where the bride lives, and, dividing into couples, the whole party enters a large number of two-wheeled covered chaises adorned with flowers and tinsel, and pulled by horses with ribbons in the plaiting of mane and tail. A long line of these gay little carts drives off to the town where the ceremony is to be performed. The whole party alights at an inn, where they all have drinks while waiting the arrival of a policeman, who announces that the Burgomaster is in attendance. The procession then goes on foot to the town hall, and is still curiously picturesque, for the women all wear straw bonnets over their best caps, and the men have their clothes ornamented with as

many buttons as they can conveniently attach. At the town hall the Burgomaster is found seated at a long table in the large room, and facing him the bride and bridegroom are given chairs with the parents on either side. The guests place themselves according to various rules of precedence which must not be disregarded, and then the Burgomaster gives a solemn and fittingly paternal address on the importance of the marriage tie, which sometimes brings tears to the eyes of the more impressionable. After signing the registers, there is much hand-shaking, and then the whole party returns to the inn, with bridesmaids scattering confetti in front. Before starting for the homeward drive, healths are drunk by all, beginning with the bridegroom. The wedding-feast is ready when the procession reaches home, and hours pass before it is concluded. The couple whose nuptials have thus been celebrated are often as young as sixteen and seventeen, and in such cases they live with the bridegroom's parents until he is old enough to take a farm of his own.

In nearly all the villages where quaint costumes survive the children are a wonderful study. The boys in their earliest years wear very full skirts, with their stout little bodies compressed into very tight bodices, fixed at the

back with large hooks and eyes, a practice which has a tendency to make their heads look large. They wear big buttons of gold or silver at the neck, which distinguishes them from the girls, who, strangely enough, are not provided with these ornaments. The boys also wear earrings, which will be noticed in some of Mr. Jungman's pictures.

A striking peculiarity of the dress of the girls and women of Zeeland is the wing-like erection worn on the shoulders. It is made of a buckram stiffening, and is covered with a square of material, which is folded in an elaborate fashion over the back, besides covering the shoulders. The Volendam vrouw puts on so many petticoats that she increases her apparent size enormously, but her bulk is slight when compared with the girls of Zeeland in their Sunday garments. What might be taken to be a skirt worn over a crinoline is simply the result of putting one thick woollen skirt over another! It is the fashion, too, in Zeeland to wear short and extremely tight sleeves, and it is considered an advantage to have very red arms, to which end a girl will pinch her skin and wear her short sleeves sufficiently tight to impede circulation. Fashions vary as one travels from place to place in Holland, and because there are baggy trousers in one decayed town of the

Zuider Zee does not imply that these will be found in the others.

In Elspeet, a town of Gelderland, the people say they prefer the old costume, but that the modern ready-made clothes from Germany are so much less trouble. The elaborate caps which were such a marked feature of the Dutchwoman's costume took up a great amount of time.

The Gelderland farmhouse is usually a very primitive establishment, generally divided into three parts. One section is given up to the cows, whose lives, owing to the scanty pasture of this part of Holland, are mainly spent in their stalls. Opening from this capacious cow-house is the general room of the farm, wherein the farmer and his wife and family live and sleep, cupboard-beds being made in the walls. If there should be any lack of space more room is obtained by making bed cupboards in the cowhouse; the third section of the farm is generally let to a lodger.

The soil of Gelderland, which is above sea-level, being very unproductive, the cattle are only taken out for a short time for grazing, and then a child will lead the gentle beasts, with a rope attached to the horns, to some particular patches of grass on the moors. The sheep, however, manage to do comparatively well on the poor soil.

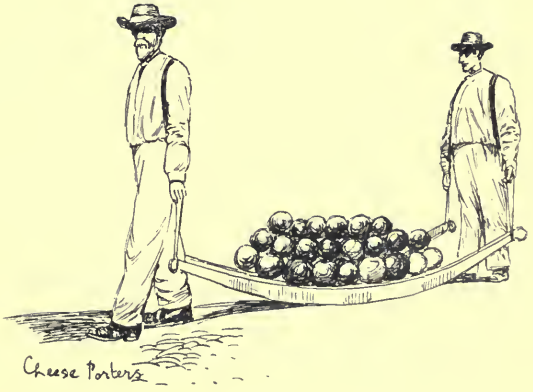
Wooden clogs, or *klompen*, are the usual footgear in Holland, and here and there one discovers the shops where these inexpensive shoes are manufactured by a man and his assistant. The apprentice reduces the pieces of poplar wood roughly into shape, and the master gouges out the insides and finishes them.

Although a law exists forbidding the use of dogs for pulling anything but a light cart for milk or other produce, it is no uncommon sight to see a dog struggling along with his tongue lolling out while his master sits comfortably in the cart, oblivious to the unfair load the animal is drawing.

The changes Holland has witnessed in the last fifty years include the gradual ousting of the curious flat-bottomed fishing-boat, or *bom*, by the steel-built sloop, for the contest with keeled vessels was too unequal to continue for long. The Hollander's long ascendency in the North Sea fishing trade was due to the discovery in the fourteenth century by a Dutchman named Benkelszoon of the art of preserving the herring with salt.

Holland is mainly the delta of a series of great rivers, from which the sea is kept out by an elaborate system of dykes, requiring constant attention, and upon a half an inch of water depends the safety of the country. Although

the visitor often goes through the country without seeing the silent warfare the inhabitants maintain with the sea and inland waters, he cannot miss the countless windmills which keep the polders drained. Further than this, the water-level of the canals must be always watched, or in a very short time the rich pastures would all too soon become useless marshland. The Dutchman maintains this continual fight with his unsleeping foe with complete success, and the mere persistence of Holland with its present outline on the map of Europe is a testimony to the determination and courage of a simple and still picturesque people.


Cheese Porters

AN INTERIOR, VOLENDAM

London
Home

A MARKEN INTERIOR

## BABY IN CHAIR

A RATHER charming seat on wheels. The little pot underneath is filled with burning peat to keep baby's feet warm.

NICO

A LITTLE MAIDEN

THE babies of Axel, in their brightly-coloured clothes and extraordinary high shoulders, resemble nothing so much as gorgeous butterflies.

A BOY OF VEERE ASTRIDE A ROCKING-HORSE

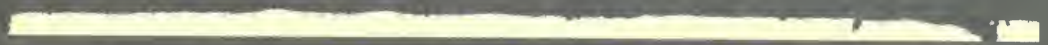
THIS rather charming toy is of the simplest and most practical construction; an accident is almost impossible. The feather pompon which decorates each child's cap is a survival of the period when Veere was a large and important garrison town.

A GIRL WITH A RABBIT

A CHILD of the island of Urk.

A BOY SMOKING, VOLENDAM

THE Dutch children are professed smokers from their earliest childhood. The reprehensible habit does not seem to do them much harm.



A GIRL WITH A DOLL

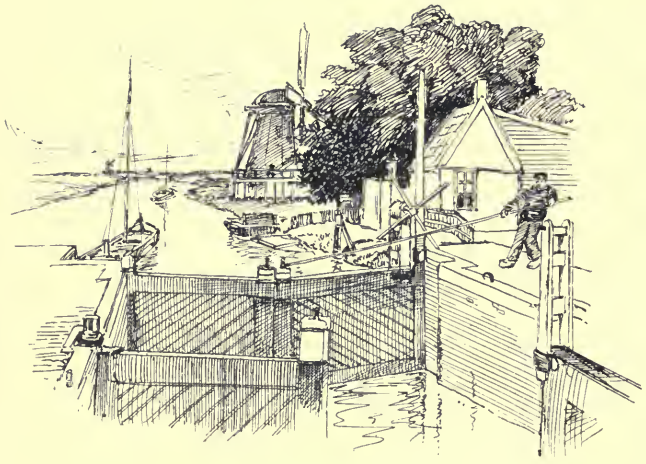
A BABY of Volendam.

A PEASANT BOY OF VEERE
ON SKATES

As soon as they can walk the little Hollanders are encouraged to skate, and children of four or five years are adepts in the art.

A GIRL OF MARKEN

THE dress of these women is one of the most interesting of Dutch costumes. A quaint characteristic is the plait of hair on either side of the face, worn alike by young and old.



A BOY CLEANING A KETTLE

The Burgher
Orphanage
Amsterdam

## THE DOVE

THE harbour of Volendam. The solid black posts tipped with white, which border the dyke, are very picturesque.

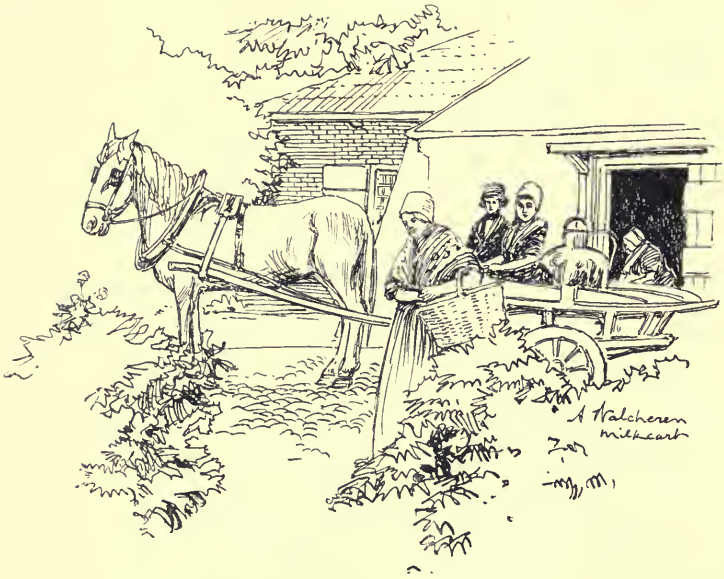
A FISHER-BOY

AN AMSTERDAM STREET-BOY WITH CLAPPERS

CLAPPERS date back to the Middle Ages, when persons suffering from infectious diseases were obliged to sound them as a warning to people to leave the road clear for them.

A PEASANT GIRL OF GOES

# THE MOWER


A Walcheren
milkcart

## THE SALE OF A COW

A BARGAIN of this kind is not complete until the buyer and seller have clasped hands three times on an offer. The clasp is repeated at each bid, and the final one which meets the consent of the seller is ratified by three sounding clasps of the hands.

A GIRL OF GOES

A GIRL OF ELSPEET

## RELIGIOUS PROCESSION—I.

THIS and the following plate represent a procession which takes place every year in the autumn. The devout Volendamers make a pilgrimage to the village of Kevelaar in Germany. They return in procession, walking from Edam, and break up in the little Volendam church.

Interior of
Monaincholeam Church

RELIGIOUS PROCESSION—II.

For the other half of this picture see the preceding plate.

WOMAN OF HULST

HULST is a small village in the South of Zeeland. This costume is very remarkable. The women are noted for their good looks.

NICO

MOTHER AND BABY

## A MOTHER AND CHILD OF AXEL

AXEL is a village of the province of Zeeland. The clothes of the feminine population are of an originality bordering on the grotesque, the aim and end of each being to attain an unparalleled breadth of appearance. The small tower in the background is that of the village hall.

A FISHERWOMAN OF ZANDVOORT

## OLD WOMAN OF DRENTHE

THE foundation of this woman's headgear is a close-fitting cap of solid gold, which is covered first with blue muslin and finally with lace.

A RACE ON SKATES

AN OLD FISHERMAN

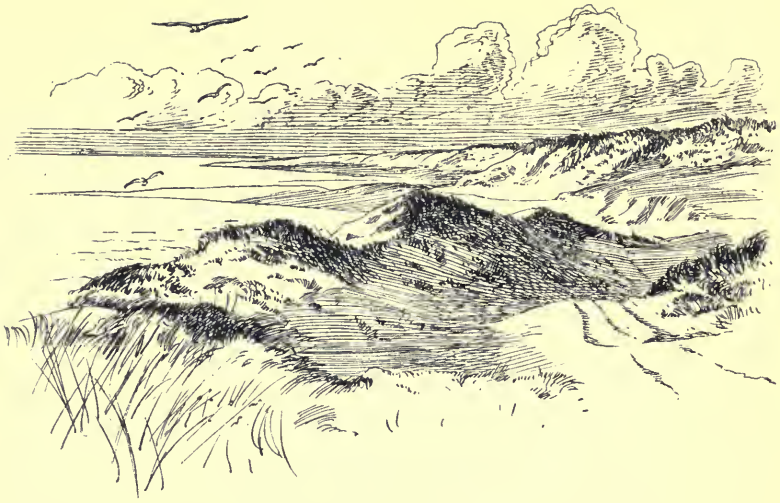
Jan Pantjes.

AN OLD MAN OF AXEL

THIS type of the most southern portion of Holland is very different from the stolid Teutonic population of the greater part of Holland. This difference is due to the large admixture of Spanish blood, dating from the Middle Ages.

GORDON
HOME

TIRED OUT



AN OLD FISHERMAN OF SCHEVENINGEN

THE OLD VILLAGE OF VEERE

A MAN'S HEAD, VOLENDAM

Volendam

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